DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 335 920 FL 019 409

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TITLE Causative Constructions in Nepali.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 13p.; In: Kansas Working Papers in Linguistics, 1991, v16; see FL 019 402.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Language Research; Linguistic Theory; *Nepali; *Semantics; Structural Analysis (Linguistics); *Syntax; *Uncommonly Taught Languages
IDENTIFIERS *Causatives (Grammar)

ABSTRACT

Causative constructions have been observed to have an iconic relationship between form and meaning. In Nepali, the citation form of a verb ends in "-nu." By inserting the morpheme "-au" before "-nu," one can change the verbs into corresponding causative verbs. In addition, Nepali has several causative verbs that form periphrastic causative constructions. Analysis of the syntax and semantics of the major causative constructions in Nepali suggests an implicational scale ranging six causative constructions in terms of the realization of effect from the strongest to the weakest: lexical (e.g., "maar-nu"), morphological "-(au"), periphrastic causative ("lagau-nu, banau-nu, garau-nu, and di-nu"). It can be concluded that the iconic relationship between the structural integration of causative constructions on one hand and the conceptual encapsulation of cause and effect on the other does occur in this language. (MSE)

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CAUSATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN NEPALI[1]

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ED 359920

Abstract: This paper discusses the syntax and semantics of causative constructions in Nepali. The results of this study lend support to the hypothesis of syntactic iconicity between the degree of structural integration of the causative constructions on the one hand, and the degree of conceptual encapsulation of cause and effect relation encoded on the other.

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0. Introduction

Causative constructions, alongside of verb serialization, have been observed to exhibit the iconic relationship between form and meaning.[2] Haiman (1983: 783) has made the following generalization on the syntactic iconicity encoded by causative constructions:

> If two causative constructions contrast within a given language, ... and they contrast semantically with respect to the conceptual distance between cause and result, then the conceptual distance between cause and result will correspond to the formal distance between cause and result.

What this principle amounts to is the following: if a given language has two or more causative constructions which contrast in terms of the degree of structural integration of cause and result clauses (e.g. analytic - agglutinative - synthetic causatives), then the causative constructions which exhibit greater structural fusion (e.g. synthetic causative) tend to encode more direct, non-mediated causation than those with lesser structural integration (e.g. analytic causative).

This generalization correctly captures the close iconic relationship between the degree of structural (formal) integration of causative constructions on the one hand, and the degree of conceptual (semantic) closeness of cause and result relation encoded on the other.

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Kansas Working Papers in Linguistics, 1991, Volume 16, pp. 99-110

This paper analyses the syntax and semantics of causative constructions in Nepali. The results of this study, though preliminary, lend support to the synthetic iconicity of causative constructions observed in other languages.[3]

1. Causative Morpheme "au"

In Nepali, the citation form of a verb ends in "nu", e.g. "gar-nu" (to do), "lekh-nu" (to write), "sun-nu" (to hear, listen to). By inserting the morpheme "au" before "nu", we can change the verbs into corresponding causative verbs, as shown below:

(1) John-le[4] tyo kitab dekh-yo͂[5]
Agt that book see-3rd/Past[6]
'John saw the book'

(1') Mai-le John-lai[7] tyo kitab dekh-a-ye͂[8]
I Agt Pat see-Caus-1st/Sg/Past
'I showed John the book'

(2) John-le tyo katha sun-yo͂
Agt story hear-3rd/Past
'John heard the story'

(2') Mai-le John-lai tyo katha sun-a-ye[9]
Pat hear-Caus-1st/Sg/Past
'I told John the story'

(3) John-le engregi sik-yo͂
English learn-3rd/Sg/Past
'John learned English'

(3') Mai-le John-lai engregi sik-a-ye͂
learn-Caus-1st/Sg/Past
'I taught John English'

(4) John-le tarkarie kha-yo
curry eat-3rd/Sg/Past
'John ate curry'

(4') Mai-le John-lai tarkarie khuwa-ye͂[10]
eat-Caus-1st/Sg/Past
'I fed John curry'

(5) John-le patha gar-yo
homework do-3rd/Sg/Past
'John did the homework'

(5') Mai-le John-lai patha gar-a-yẽ
do-Caus-1st/Sg/Past
'I made John do the homework'

(6) Rukh dhal-yo
tree fall-3rd/Sg/Past
'The tree fell'

(6') Hawa-le rukh dhal-a-yo
wind fall-Caus-3rd/Sg/Past
'The wind felled the tree'

As can be observed from the above examples, this morphological process of causativization usually encodes non-mediated, 'direct' causation in which the causer directly acts on the causee. Hence, this form of causativization strongly implies the realization of caused events, as the contradiction of the following sentence illustrates:

(7) Mai-le John-lai tarkarie { (a) *khuwa-yeko thien[11]
eat-Past P be-1st/Sg/Past
(b) **khuwa-ye[12]
eat-1st/Sg/Past }

tara us-le kha-yeṇa
but he eat-3rd/Neg/Past

(a) '*I had fed John curry, but he didn't eat'
(b) '*I fed John curry, but he didn't eat'

Although this causativization process derives a number of transitive verbs from the corresponding intransitive, it is important to note that there are cases where the independently lexical causative verb exists alongside the derived causative verb with subtle semantic differences:

(8) John mar-yo
die-3rd/Sg/Past
'John died'

(8') Mai-le John-lai maar-yẽ
Agt Pat kill-1st/Sg/Past
'I killed John'

(8'') Mai-le John-lai mar-au-yẽ
die-Caus-1st/Sg/Past
'I got John killed'

Here, the verb "maar-nu" in (8') exists alongside the derived causative form "mar-au-nu" in (8''). Although the "au" causative usually encodes non-mediated direct causation, as discussed with respect to the examples (1) - (6), (8'') here can only mean

indirect causation which implies no direct physical contact.[13]

This semantic difference between (8') and (8'') can be accounted for as follows. When the verb has no corresponding lexical (synthetic) causative, as in (1) through (6), the corresponding morphological (agglutinative) causative encodes the non-mediated direct causation. However, when the verb allows for both lexical causative (e.g. (8')) and morphological causative (e.g. (8'')), the lexical causative encodes direct causation in contrast to the morphological causative. Therefore, in this case, the morphological causative form "mar-au-yen", which would usually encode non-mediated direct causation, is semantically demoted to indirect causation in the presence of the lexical causative form "maar-yen".

This contrast between lexical (synthetic) causative and morphological (agglutinative) causative fits in with Haiman's observation whereby it is claimed that 'greater fusion or reduction of the causative morpheme signals directness of causation.' (Haiman 1983: 786) Bernard Comrie makes the same point when he says 'the [construction] closer to the lexical end is more appropriate for the direct causative.' (Comrie 1989: 173)

2. Periphrastic Causative Constructions in Nepali

Nepali has several causative verbs which form periphrastic causative constructions. These verbs including "banau-nu" (make), "garau-nu" (make, do), "lagau-nu" (apply, assign), and "di-nu" (give), encode different shades of causation which range from coercion through permission to arrangement.[14]

In comparison to the morphological causativization with an "au" which we have seen in the previous section, the periphrastic causative constructions seem to encode situations where the human causee retains control over his/her action, even if the causer originally induces that action by force or by words.

In what follows, I will take a closer look at the different types of periphrastic causative constructions in respect to the two semantic parameters: (I) modes (manner) of causation, and (II) implication of realization of the caused event.

The causative construction with "banau-nu" (make) co-occurs with the present participle form of the verb, which is composed of the root and the present participle suffix "-ney" (e.g. au-ney 'coming'). This causative construction encodes the enabling of the intended action prior to the realization of an intended action, as the following sentences illustrate:

(9) Mai-le John-lai tarkarie kha-ney bana-yẽ
I Agt Pat curry eat-Present P make-1st/Sg/Past
'I convinced John to eat curry' or
'I made John willing to eat curry'

(10) Us-le ma-lai mantri hu-ney bana-yo
he minister be-Present P make-3rd/Sg/Past
'He arranged for me to become a minister' or
'He made me capable of becoming a minister'

(11) Us-le pani par-ney bana-yo
he rain fall-Present P make-3rd/Sg/Past
'He made arrangements for it to rain'

The periphrastic causative construction with "garau-nu" (make) is syntactically and semantically similar to the one with "banau-nu". Like "banau-nu", the causative verb "garau-nu" co-occurs with the present participle form of the verb (e.g. ja-ney 'going'). Semantically, again like "banau-nu", the causative construction with "garau-nu" encodes modes of causation ranging from convincing to arrangement:

(12) Mai-le John-lai bahira ja-ney gara-ye
outside go-Present P make-1st/Sg/Past
'I convinced John to go outside'

(13) Gophal-le ma-lai bhat kha-ney gara-yo
rice eat-Present P make-3rd/Sg/Past
'Gophal convinced me to eat rice' or
'Gophal made me willing to eat rice'

The "banau-nu" and "garau-nu" causative constructions are semantically very close. However, as pointed out by my informant, the former seems to imply a slightly stronger form of causation than the latter, as shown below:

(14) Tiniharu-le tyo machine chal-ney gara-ye
they the machine work-Present P make-3rd/Pl/Past
'They made the machine work'

(14') Tiniharu-le tyo machine chal-ney ban-a-ye
they the machine work-Pres P make-3rd/Pl/Past
'They made the machine work'

The sentence (14) means 'they got the machine to work whenever necessary', while (14') means 'they repaired the machine which was out of order and got it to work'. This semantic difference between (14) and (14') seems to imply that the "banau-nu" causative encodes a slightly stronger form of arrangement exerted by the causer toward the causee than the "garau-nu" causative. However, it is

not clear at this stage how much validity this tentative semantic characterisation has for other cases.[15]

The semantic characteristic of 'arrangement' common to both "garau-nu" and "banau-nu" causatives is highlighted when they are contrasted with the "au" morphological causative, as shown below:

(15) *?Hawa-le ghar dhal-ney {bana-yo / gara-yo}
wind house fall
*?'The wind arranged for the house to fall'

(15') Hawa-le ghar dhal-a-yo
fall-Caus-3rd/Sg/Past
'The wind felled the house'

(16) Tiniharu-le ghar dhal-ney {bana-yẽ / gara-ye}
they
'They arranged for the house to fall'

The sentence (15) is semantically odd because the semantic characteristic of 'arrangement' encoded by the "banau-nu" and "garau-nu" causatives is incompatible with the nonhuman causer "hawa" (wind).[16]

On the other hand, the "au" morphological causative, which normally encodes non-mediated direct causation, is semantically compatible with the nonhuman causer "hawa", as shown in (15'). In contrast with (15), the 'arrangement' sense of "banau-nu" and "garau-nu" causatives is compatible with the sentence (16), which for example describes the arrangements made in a film being shot on location.

The "banau-nu" causative and the "garau-nu" causative share another important semantic characteristic. That is to say, in contrast to the "au" morphological causative, they are neutral as to the realization of the caused events, as illustrated below:

(17) Mai-le John-lai tarkaıie kha-ney {bana-yẽ / gara-ye}
I Agt Pat curry eat-Pres P
'I convinced John to eat curry'

(18) Mai-le John-lai bahira ja-ney {bana-yẽ / gara-ye}
outside go-Pres P
'I convinced John to go outside'

Neither sentence (17) nor (18) necessarily implies that the caused events ('John's eating curry' and 'John's going outside') actually happened.

In fact, the following sentence in which the realization of a caused event is negated is marginally acceptable, as shown below:

(17') *?Mai-le John-lai tarkarie kha-ney bana-yeko
make-Past P

thien tara us-le kha-yena
be-1st/Sg/Past but he eat-Neg/3rd/Sg/Past
'I had convinced John to eat curry but he didn't eat'

(17'') *Mai-le John-lai tarkarie kha-ney bana-yẽ
make-1st/Sg/Past
tara us-le kha-yena[17]
'I convinced John to eat curry but he didn't eat'

Considering the neutrality of (17) in respect of the realisation of a caused event, the sentence (17') is expected to be well-formed. However, here the implication of 'realization' conveyed by the past perfect form seems to override the neutral implication of the "banau-nu" and "garau-nu" causatives, thereby rendering this sentence lower in acceptability than expected. However, this sentence is still higher in acceptability than the following comparable sentence (19), which involves the "au" morphological causative:

(19) (=7a) *Mai-le John-lai tarkarie khuwa-yeko
eat-Past P

thien tara us-le kha-yena
be-1st/Sg/Past but he eat-3rd/Neg/Past
'*I had fed John curry, but he didn't eat'

The third type of periphrastic construction in Nepali involves the causative verb "lagau-nu" (apply, assign). It co-occurs with the infinitive form of the verb which ends in "-na" (e.g. "garna" 'do'), as shown below:[18]

(20) Mai-le John-lai patha gar-na laga-ye
do-Inf make-1st/Sg/Past
'I made John do homework'

(21) Mai-le John-lai Mary-lai kut-na laga-ye
hit-Inf make-1st/Sg/Past
'I made John hit Mary'

(22) John-le Gophal-lai has-na laga-yo
laugh-Inf make-3rd/Sg/Past
'John made Gophal laugh'

The "lagau-nu" causative differs from both "banau-nu" and "garau-nu" causatives in its implication of the caused event: sentences (20) through (22) strongly imply that the caused events happened. Hence the ungrammaticality of the following sentences in which the realization of the caused event is negated:

(23) *Mai-le John-lai tarkarie kha-na laga-yeko
curry eat-Inf make-Past P

thiẽn tara us-le kha-yena
be-1st/Sg/Past but he eat-3rd/Neg/Past
'*I had made John eat curry but he didn't eat'

(23') **Mai-le John-lai tarkarie kha-na laga-ye
make-1st/Sg/Past

tara us-le kha-yena
'*I made John eat curry but he didn't eat'

Due to the polysemous nature of "lagau-nu", however, there are cases where these sentences are acceptable. That is to say, these sentences are acceptable in the directive sense of 'I (had) told John to eat curry but he didn't eat'.[19] In this interpretation, the verb "lagau-nu" doesn't function as a causative verb with the strong implication of the realization of a caused event. Rather, it functions as a directive verb which is even lower in the implication than "banau-nu" or "garau-nu".

So far, we have seen three types of periphrastic causative constructions with "banau-nu", "garau-nu", and "lagau-nu", all of which encode causation.

Another possible semantic type of causative is the "permissive", which is encoded in Nepali by the verb "di-nu" (give). Like the "lagau-nu" causative, the "di-nu" periphrastic causative co-occurs with the infinitive form of the verb, as shown below:

(24) Gophal-le ma-lai sut-na di-yo
sleep-Inf give-3rd/Past
'Gophal let me sleep'

(25) Mai-le John-lai dhokaa khol-na di-yẽ
door open-Inf give-1st/Past
'I allowed John to open the door'

(26) Tiniharu-le us-lai mantri hu-na di-e
they minister be-Inf give-3rd/Pl/Past
'They allowed him to become a minister'

Like the "banau-nu" and "garau-nu" causatives, the "di-nu" causative is normally neutral as to the realization of the event encoded by the infinitive verb. Therefore, sentences (24) through (26) are neutral as to whether the events 'my sleeping', 'John's opening the door' and 'his becoming a minister' happened or not. Moreover, unlike the "banau-nu" and "garau-nu" causatives, the "di-nu" causative does allow for the following sentences in which the event encoded by the complement verb is negated:[20]

(25') Mai-le John-lai dhokaa khol-na di-yeko
give-Past P

thiẽ tara us-le khol-yena
be-1st/Sg/Past but he open-3rd/Neg/Past
'I had allowed John to open the door but he didn't open'

(25'') Mai-le John-lai dhokaa khol-na di-yẽ
give-1st/Sg/Past

tara us-le khol-yena
'I allowed John to open the door but he didn't open'

The difference between the "di-nu" causative and other three types of causatives can be accounted for by the semantic difference between "permission" and "true causation".[21] The permissive "di-nu", which only means 'not prevent event from happening', is weaker than other types of causatives in terms of implication of the realization of an event, hence the acceptability of sentences (25') and (25'').

3. Conclusion

On the basis of the observations of the above two sections, I propose the following implicational scale. It ranges six causative constructions in Nepali in terms of the implication of the realization of effect from the strongest one to the weakest one:

(27)

implication strongest						implication weakest
← lexical causative (e.g. maar-nu)	>	morphological causative ("au")	>	periphrastic causative lagau > banau > garau > lagau > di		→
				-nu 'make' -nu -nu	-nu 'tell'	-nu

In this paper, we have given an overview of the major causative constructions in Nepali. Although the results of our findings are very preliminary, Nepali has been observed to display the iconic relationship which holds between the structural integration of causative constructions on the one hand, and the conceptual encapsulation of cause and effect on the other.

NOTES

1 This study is based on a paper written under the direction of Prof. Bernard Comrie's course on Directed Reading at the University of Southern California (Fall 1989). The author would like to acknowledge his appreciation of the comments and criticism provided by the following individuals: Prof. Comrie, Stephen Matthews, Pramod Pokharel (native speaker-consultant), and anonymous reviewers of KWPL. Needless to say, none of these persons are held responsible for the potential errors and misunderstandings in this paper.

2 See Bruce (1988) for the discussion of verb serialization from the perspective of iconicity.

3 See Comrie (1989), pp. 165-84, for an overview of syntax/semantics of causative constructions.

4 "le" is a particle marking the agent of the transitive sentence in the past tense. In the present tense, the agent is not marked by "le", as shown below:

(i) Balbir kam gar-chha
work do-3rd/Sg/Mas/Present
'Balbir does the work'

5 The phonetic symbol "~" denotes nasalization of vowels.

6 The following abbreviations are used in the glosses: Agt=Agent, Pat=Patient, Caus=Causative, Neg=Negative, Past=Past Tense, Inf=Infinitive, Pres P=Present Participle, Past P=Past Participle, Sg=Singular, Pl=Plural, Mas=Masculine, 1st=1st person, 3rd=3rd person.

7 "Lai" is a particle marking the animate (prototypically human) NPs to which actions of subject NPs are addressed. This particle is provisionally coded as "Pat(ient)" in the glosses.

8 The causative morpheme, which is underlined, often surfaces as "a" under the influence of the following vowel.

9 This causative form "sun-au-nu (citation form)" (let hear, tell) though theoretically possible, doesn't seem to be used by the native speakers. The verb "bhannu" (tell) is usually used instead, as shown below:

(i) Mai-le John-lai tyo katha bhaney
story told
'I told John the story'

10 Here, since the insertion of the causative morpheme causes complex phonological change in the root "kha", it is difficult to single out a causative morpheme.

11 In Nepali, the past perfect form of the verb is composed of the verb root + past participle "-yako" (e.g. gar-yako 'done'), and past tense form of the verb "chha-nu" (be) (e.g. thien (I was), thiyo (s/he was) and etc.), as shown below:

(i) Mai-le patha gar-yako thien
I Agt homework do-Past P be-1st/Sg/Past
'I had done the homework'

12 In Nepali, in comparison to English for example, it seems semantically more odd to use the past tense form of the verb in the first conjunct of this type.

13 The native speaker I have consulted said that the form "mar-au-ye" implies that 'I planned his death, but I was not on the scene when he died', e.g., that 'I had given him a time-bomb which went off later and killed him.'

14 "Banau-nu" and "garau-nu" are morphological causative forms of the corresponding intransitive verbs, "ban-nu" (be made) and "gar-nu" (do), respectively. On the other hand, "lagau-nu" is not related in the same way to the apparently similar "lag-nu" (carry away). For the sake of convenience, I have not singled out the causative suffix of "banau-nu" and "garau-nu" when they function as periphrastic causative verbs. I will translate the above three causative verbs into 'make' in the glosses.

15 An anonymous reviewer of KWPL suggested to me the possibility that the difference between (14) and (14') might be due to the causative verb "garau-nu" having a wider scope on the aspectual interpretation of the embedded clause than the verb "banau-nu".

16 Stephen Matthews suggests the possibility that the semantic characteristic 'arrangement' might be reduced to the more primitive concept of 'intention'. (Personal communication)

17 See Note 12 for the reason why (17'') is lower in acceptability than (17').

18 Besides causative verbs, the infinitives ending in "-na" are used with such verbs as "sak-nu" (can), "ant-nu" (be about to do), and "jannu" (know how to do).

19 Notice that even the sentence (23'), which is normally lower in acceptability than its past perfect counterpart (23), is acceptable in this interpretation, though less preferred.

20 Although both the sentences (25') and (25'') are acceptable, there is a clear preference for (25'), as has been the case in the preceding comparable examples.

21 For the difference between "permissives" and "true causatives", see Comrie (1989), p. 171.

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